

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8262

INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECON, SN

SUBJ: SINGAPORE TURNS TWELVE--PM LEE'S ASSESSMENT

1. SINGAPORE CELEBRATED ITS TWELFTH NATIONAL DAY AUGUST 9, ESCHEWING SOME OF THE LAVISH CEREMONIALS OF PAST YEARS FOR SIX DECENTRALIZED "NEIGHBORHOOD PARTIES" AND AN HOUR-LONG FIREWORKS DISPLAY JUST OFF THE SOUTH COAST FINANCIAL DISTRICT. NEITHER A MORNING THUNDERSTORM NOR PM LEE'S CHARACTERISTICALLY GLOOMY NATIONAL DAY MESSAGE DAMPENED THE FESTIVITIES.

2. LEE GRUDGINGLY ADMITTED THE GOOD NEWS--AN 8.3 PERCENT INCREASE IN REAL GDP FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 1977--BUT POINTED OUT THAT INCREASINGLY PROTECTIONIST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, A STILL-SLUGGISH WORLD ECONOMY AND AN INCREASE IN DOMESTIC UNEMPLOYMENT DEMANDED HARDER WORK FROM THE POPULACE. HE CALLED FOR LOWER

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EXPECTATIONS AMONG SINGAPOREANS, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE YOUNGER CITIZENS WHO HAD EXPERIENCED NOTHING BUT REASONABLY PROSPEROUS TIMES AND YEAR-TO-YEAR RISES IN THE STANDARD OF LIVING. "BECAUSE WE AVOIDED MASSIVE RETRENCHMENTS (LAYOFFS AND FIRINGS) AND PAY CUTS THE OIL CRISIS CAUSED IN PLACES LIKE HONGKONG, YOUNG SINGAPOREANS HAVE NOT BEEN TEMPERED BY HARDSHIP", LEE SAID. "WE JUST SAVE AND INVEST FOR OUR FUTURE. THE JAPANESE PRIVATE DOMESTIC

SAVINGS AND INVESTMENT RATES WERE OVER 34 PERCENT OF THEIR WAGES FOR THE 1960S AND 1970S. THIS WAS A KEY FACTOR IN THEIR ECONOMIC SUCCESS".

3. LEE ALSO CALLED FOR BUSINESS TO BE MORE AGGRESSIVE IN PENETRATING NEW MARKETS, ESPECIALLY IN THE MIDDLE EAST. HE CONTRASTED THE "100,000 HARD-WORKING KOREANS" THERE WITH SINGAPOREANS WHO OFTEN PACKED UP AND CAME HOME AFTER A FEW MONTHS DESPITE DOUBLE OR TREBLE THE SALARY THEY COULD EARN IN SINGAPORE. "BUSINESSMEN MUST GET OUT, MAKE CONTACTS, SWEAT IT OUT TO SELL OUR GOODS AND OUR SERVICES. THERE IS NO EASY WAY," HE SAID.

4. NATIONAL DAY MESSAGES WERE RECEIVED FROM 26 NATIONS, INCLUDING DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA AND VIETNAM. THE CAMBODIAN MESSAGE WAS FORMAL, CONVEYING WISHES FOR HEALTH AND LONG LIFE TO PRESIDENT SHEARES AND HAPPINESS TO THE PEOPLE OF SINGAPORE. ACCORDING TO A VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY STATEMENT MONITORED IN HONG KONG, VIETNAM HOPES ITS FRIENDSHIP WITH SINGAPORE "WOULD BE CONSOLIDATED AND DEVELOPED WITH EACH PASSING DAY". PRESS PUBLISHED FULL TEXT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT SHEARES.

5. FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM TOUCHED ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN HIS NATIONAL DAY SPEECH TO HIS CONSTITUENCY, SAYING EVERY RIGHT IMPLIES A RESPONSIBILITY, AND A GOOD CITIZEN IS AS SCRUPULOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ABOUT DISCHARGING HIS RESPONSIBILITIES AS HE IS IN INSISTING ON HIS RIGHTS. A BALANCE IS NEEDED, RAJA SAID, BECAUSE A SOCIETY WHICH STRESSES ONLY RIGHTS DEGENERATES INTO ANARCHY AND ONE WHICH STRESSES ONLY RESPONSIBILITIES BECOMES TYRANNICAL.

6. EMBASSY COMMENT: SEPTEL DISCUSSES THE STATISTICS ON THE ECONOMY FOR THE FIRST HALF OF THE YEAR. EVEN WITH AN EXPECTED SLOWDOWN IN THE SECOND HALF, THE COUNTRY SHOULD EASILY SHOW THE PROJECTED 6-8 PERCENT FORECASTED FOR 1977. AS TO LEE'S MESSAGE, HIS PENCHANT FOR FINDING THE CLOUD IN EVERY SILVER LINING HAS BEEN NOTED MANY TIMES BEFORE. THE ONLY QUESTION, PERHAPS, IS THAT OF THE PM'S CREDIBILITY. THE AVERAGE SINGAPOREAN HAS HAD A TASTE OF PROSPERITY, AND GOODS IN THE DUTY-FREE STORES WHICH DOT THE ISLAND SHOW HIM THAT FURTHER HARD WORK CAN HAVE INCREASED REWARDS. WHETHER LEE'S PRONOUNCEMENTS THAT ALL MAY STILL BE LOST ARE A MORE EFFECTIVE SPUR TO PRODUCTIVITY IS OPEN TO QUESTION. ALSO, IT IS INTERESTING THAT DESPITE RECENT INDO-CHINESE FULMINATIONS AGAINST ASEAN, IT APPEARS THE SRV AND CAMBODIA DO NOT WISH BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE GOS TO GROW TOO COOL. HOLDRIDGE

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